

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-14 (Canceled)

Claim 15. (Original) A method for closing a severed sternum having first and second portions that are formed after a sternal incision has been made perpendicular to the plane of the anterior or posterior surface of the sternum, each portion having exposed cortical and cancellous surfaces at the sternal incision margin, comprising: placing at least one first hole in the first sternal portion, such that the first and second holes form a pathway from the anterior surface to the posterior surface of the sternum, the pathway obliquely traversing the sternal incision margins when the first and second sternal portions are approximated; at least partially approximating the first and second sternal portions, and performing one of the following steps (a)-(d):

- (a) providing a device comprising a first bearing member having a collapsed and an expanded position, a second bearing member, and a sternum joining member having an axis and engaging the first and second bearing members; inserting the first bearing member through the pathway with the first bearing member in a collapsed position, until the first bearing member extends past the posterior surface of the sternum and assumes the expanded position; moving the second bearing member along the axis of the sternum joining member until the first and second sternal portions are approximated; and securing the sternum joining member to the second bearing member; or
- (b) providing a device comprising a first bearing member having a collapsed and an expanded position, and a sternum joining member engaging the first bearing member and having an axis and a free end, inserting the first bearing member through the pathway with the first bearing member in a collapsed position, until the first bearing member extends past the posterior surface of the sternum and assumes the expanded position; engaging a second bearing member with the free end of the sternum joining member; moving the second bearing member along the axis of the sternum joining

member until the first and second sternal portions are approximated; and securing the sternum joining member to the second bearing member; or

- (c) providing a device comprising a first bearing member, and a sternum joining member engaging the first bearing member and having an axis and a free end; inserting the free end of the sternum joining member in the formed pathway from either the anterior or posterior surface of the sternum until the free end extends past the opposite surface of the sternum; engaging a second bearing member with the free end of the sternum joining member; moving the second bearing member along the axis of the sternum joining member until the first and second sternal portions are approximated; and securing the sternum joining member to the second bearing member; or
- (d) inserting a sternal joining member having an axis and first and second ends, in the formed pathway until the ends extend past the anterior and posterior surfaces of the sternum; engaging a first bearing member with the first end and a second bearing member with the second end of the sternum joining member; moving the second bearing member along the axis of the sternum joining member until the first and second sternal portions are approximated; and securing the sternum joining member to the second bearing member.

Claim 16. (Previously Amended) A method for closing a severed sternum having first and second portions that are formed after a sternal incision has been made perpendicular to the plane of the anterior or posterior surface of the sternum, each portion having exposed cortical and cancellous surfaces at the sternal incision margin, comprising: placing at least one first hole in the first sternal portion and at least one second hole in the second sternal portion, such that the first and second holes form a pathway from one intercostal space in the first sternal portion to an opposite intercostal space in the second sternal portion, the pathway perpendicularly traversing the sternal incision margins when the first and second sternal portions are approximated; at least partially approximating the first and second sternal portions; and performing one of the following steps (a) or (b):

- (a) providing a device comprising a first bearing member, and a sternum joining member engaging the first bearing member and having an axis and a free end; inserting the free end of the sternum joining member in the formed pathway from one intercostal space until the free end extends into the opposite intercostal space; engaging a second bearing member with the free end of the sternum joining member; moving the second bearing member along the axis of the sternum joining member until the first and second sternal portions are approximated; and securing the sternum joining member to the second bearing member; or
- (b) inserting a sternal joining member having an axis and first and second ends, in the formed pathway from one intercostal space until the first and second ends extend into opposite intercostal spaces; engaging a first bearing member with the first end and a second bearing member with the second end of the sternum joining member; moving the second bearing member along the axis of the sternum joining member until the first and second sternal portions are approximated; and securing the sternum joining member to the second bearing member.

Claims 17–19 (Canceled)

Claim 20. (Canceled)